

Help Centres – English Support



PARAGRAPH - Topic Sentence

A paragraph is a group of sentences that shares a main idea. Every paragraph has the same three parts: **a topic sentence**, several supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

A good topic sentence:

1. **Introduces the topic**, and states the main idea of the paragraph
2. **Makes a point about the topic** - gives an opinion, or expresses a point of view
3. **Says what you are going to talk about**

In addition, topic sentences should not be too specific (narrow)

- If the topic sentence is too **specific**, or provides too many details, everything will be said in the topic sentence, and so the supporting sentences will have nothing to add.

... or too general (broad)

- If the topic sentence is too **general**, or is a simple statement of fact (*The sun rises in the east.*), the author's focus will be unclear and the supporting sentences will have no limits on what to discuss. A fact, for example, does not introduce any ideas, opinions, or points of view to discuss.

Compare these weak and strong examples of topic sentences

1. **Weak**, too broad (general) → *Many people around the world enjoy music.*
Strong → *Nothing bridges gaps between cultures like music.*
2. **Weak**, too narrow (specific) → *Birdfeeders in the North River neighborhood of Lake Village are attracting three times as many rodents as birds.*
Strong → *Birdfeeders can attract more rodents than birds, so it is important to know how to feed only the birds, and not the rodents.*

Examples of topic sentences - **the topic is bolded** and the author's focus is underlined:

1. **Cirque du Soleil** is popular because it is a circus that does not use animals, and it mixes acrobatics with theater.
2. **The four-day workweek** is a smart idea because it improves people's quality of life and helps the economy.
3. Studies show that **adults who play** improve their problem-solving abilities, boost their creativity, and reduce their overall stress levels.